

PEOPLE & THINGS

ALMOST every aspect of the temple site imbroglio is being obscured by ignorance and prejudice. In particular the picture of a straight fight between Mithras and Midas is a risible over-simplification of the issues involved.

Passing over the fact that the area has been available to archaeologists for some two years and that Mithraism was a pagan religion directly antagonistic to Christianity, it should at least be noted that the Mithraic community was also a legal corporation owning property and with temporal officials at its head just like the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

Mr. A. V. Bridgland seems to me a most suitable man landlord for this slice of Mithraic real estate. A venturesome Australian, open-handed, generous, ebullient, he would certainly commend himself to the Sun God as a "temporal" custodian of the site; and from all I hear he has gone even further than was strictly proper towards meeting the ten-day-old frenzy of the Ministry of Works, archaeologists and "siteseeers" at the expense of his long-term undertakings to builders, contractors and his future tenants.

Touchline Tartars

IMPRESSIVE as have been Russian athletic triumphs this year, it is still very difficult to think of the Russians as a sport-loving nation. I cannot recall any Soviet Russian I have heard of, or met in Russia, who admitted to taking part in any sport except skating. Games such as tennis are rarely played and (for good or ill!) there is not a single golf course or motor-racing track in the Soviet Union. Even football is still more of a "spectator sport" than it is in England.

Of all other countries, Australia seems to me to lie at the very opposite pole in the world of sport. There everybody swims or plays games right on into late middle-age, and their many world champions result from Australians being keener about sport than about anything else on earth.

For the Record

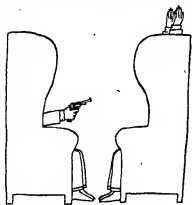
THIS year, for instance, they have three world champions in athletics, and one, Lorraine Crapp (aged fifteen!), in swimming. They have won the British Open and British Amateur Golf championships, the men's doubles at Wim-

By ATTICUS

bledon and had the runner-up in the men's singles. They have held the Davis Cup for the past four years. They hold the world bantam-weight championship and they won this year's Rugby League "Ashes" against England.

Yet, while the total number of adult males in Russia is about 70 million and in America about 50 million, Australia has fewer than three million men over the age of sixteen.

Man for man, the Australians are surely the greatest race of athletes in the world.



Steinberg del.

MR. SAUL STEINBERG, the "New Yorker" cartoonist, is the funniest Rumanian alive. In life (he passed through London last week) he is discreet but all-observing. He has a Wrangler's cranium, but hides it beneath a blue baseball cap; a raconteur's command of several European languages; and mischievous and incisive intelligence that, like his pen, leaves a fine thin mark.

Apart from seeing his new book of drawings ("The Passport") through the press Mr. Steinberg has been concerned with his largest commission to date—the decoration of a maze more than a hundred yards long for the current triennial exhibition of architecture in Milan.

This mammoth composition includes, he told me, all the features prized by admirers of his cartoons. Incised upon a prepared surface with a shoe-maker's awl, the patterns and perspectives have proved so infectious that nearly every visitor to the exhibition has been impelled to add embellishments of his own. Four masons, it would seem, are kept busy removing these additions.

Underwater Overlord

COMMANDER COUSTEAU, the famous underwater explorer will be arriving in London on November 1, and on November 2 he will lecture at the Festival Hall on his recent adventures in the Mediterranean, Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

But, while he can be persuaded to lecture and appear on television, he resolutely refuses to write the books he has promised to write—first on the 2,000-year-old Greek galley near Marseilles whose salvage after two years' work is nearly complete, then on all the adventures of his research vessel the Calypso, and then a definitive guide to underwater hunting and exploring.

Personally I doubt if these books will ever get written unless, which is unlikely, he allows James Duzan,

author of "The Great Iron Ship," who has been with him all this year, to write them. His programme simply does not allow time for paper work. When he comes to London it will be straight from the bathyscaphe of his friend Commander Huot, in which he has been photographing at great depths, and on November 3 he flies to America for a brief lecture tour before rejoining the Calypso for a survey of the Sargasso Sea and thence to the Arctic for researches under the ice-cap.

Diamond Guardee

LAST week's bullion robbery and the other fat hauls that have been made since the war add considerable point to an interesting preventive measure decided on at the headquarters, off Hatton Garden, of the Diamond Corporation, through which passes, at their monthly "sights," more than ninety per cent. of the diamond production of the world.

They have appointed as an additional watch-dog one of the most formidable Englishmen alive, Regimental Sergeant-Major R. C. Brittain of the Coldstream Guards, six foot three inches, twenty stone, and with a presence and voice which over his twenty years as an R.S.M. have struck more terror into the toughest hearts of the British Army than all the clamour of our enemies.

"Last Post"

IN fact, except when he has cause to address some "orrible little man" five hundred yards away, R.S.M. Brittain has a quiet and pleasant voice and a most friendly and modest bearing. Indicative of his character is the incident in his magnificent career which made the deepest impression upon him—the day when he was sent off parade at Sandhurst twenty-five years ago by the then Adjutant, General "Boy" Browning, whose word of command he had not heard.

Brittain will not be going to the Diamond Corporation until June of next year after the first long leave of his life. This will follow his last appearance on the parade ground on November 4 for a passing-out parade at the Mons Officer Cadet School at Aldershot.

The Stage Nelson

IT is never easy to put a great historical figure on the stage—least of all in opera; but I have heard nothing but praise for Mr. Alan Pryce-Jones's handling of Nelson in his libretto for Mr. Lennox Berkeley's new opera.

Last Wednesday's production at Sadler's Wells was scrutinised for me by Mr. Ludovic Kennedy, the author of the definitive book on Nelson's captains. He could find only two trifling peccadilloes—that Nelson is addressed as a peer two months before he actually became one, and that in the scene at Merton he wears uniform, rather than the "plain suit of black" which, according to *Carola Oman*, was his usual dress there.

Berceuse

A FRIEND had some French acquaintances to tea and his small child was encouraged to display her prowess on the piano.

A series of appalling discords was finally silenced.

"What, on earth was that?" asked the father.

"Baa. Baa. Black Sheep."

"It didn't sound like it."

"I was playing it in French"